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9 September 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
THROUGH : Deputy Director for Intelligence
SUBJECT : Comment on Assistant Secretary Hall's
Letter

1. I have read and concurred in the reply to Hall prepared by the IC Staff. This, your memorandum on the "Alerting Memorandum", and our proposal for a USIB Working Group on the Watch/NIC finally get us moving on these interrelated problems.

2. We have been asked, however, to comment on Hall's proposal, which is a rework of a scheme we found unacceptable two years ago. This is not easy. The drafting is convoluted, the word "warning" is not used consistently, and a number of incompatible elements are woven together haphazardly. We have nonetheless tried to analyze Hall's proposals in some detail and I think what follows is worth your reading. It makes clear that:

--Confusion as to the various kinds of warning and the role of the Watch Committee is indeed widespread.

--Hall does not accept that responsibility for strategic warning (Soviet attack) is a national intelligence problem, involving political and economic as well as military factors, and hence the responsibility of the DCI.

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--Hall is trying to restructure the current intelligence and crisis management business to reduce the DCI's authority in favor of the military.

3. To take the letter sentence by sentence:

There seems to be general agreement that the capability of the current Watch Committee process to provide adequate and timely warning of crisis situations is a problem.

We agree fully, but "warning of crisis situations" is the business of the entire Intelligence Community, not of the Watch Committee.

The Mid East war and Cyprus are recent examples.

The Committee's record on the Middle East War was indeed lousy. On Cyprus, it did not concern itself with predicting a coup against Makarios, which was none of its business. Its record on the two Turkish interventions was excellent.

However, there are a number of activities underway which, if better focused, should make a useful improvement in our warning capabilities.

The sentence is true, but the examples cited are not necessarily apropos.

For example, fuller use of the expanded National Military Intelligence Center/National Military Command Center facilities and personnel to support the warning process together with some of the procedures and organizations you have established, such as the National Operations and Intelligence Watch Officer's Net should both improve information flow and permit elimination of the National Indications Center as the dedicated support organization for the Watch Committee.

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The NMIC facilities can strengthen the warning process, but we should beware of the implicit suggestion that this is completely a military, and not a national, intelligence problem. The NOIWON net does improve information flow, but in support of current intelligence in general. Elimination of the NIC and exclusive reliance on the NMIC for staff support to the Watch Committee would have the effect of turning your responsibilities for strategic (large W) Warning over to the military.

In addition, recent interagency discussions and agreements on establishing procedures to support nuclear crisis management in response to NSDM 242 have established a useful precedent in defining a crisis management structure.

NSDM 242 is irrelevant to this problem and the sentence itself is meaningless. I assume it is cited because Hall is looking for another way to deal himself into the NSDM 242 game.

Many of these same considerations should also apply to management of all lesser levels of crisis.

This would appear to extend the Watch Committee, presumable supported by the NMIC, into coverage of most current intelligence.

While improved Watch Committee support and structure will be useful, the essential element in improving the warning process is upgrading the professionalism and stature of its members in recognition of its de facto role in providing intelligence support to the National Security Council. Perhaps the most effective way of providing such recognition would be to charter the Watch Committee under a National Security Council Directive.

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The Watch Committee has never been given, nor has it ever presumed to claim, such "a de facto role". Most of us have read the Act of 1947 as assigning this responsibility to the DCI, and you have met this responsibility through your membership on WSAG, SRG, etc. Hall appears to be saying here that the Committee should be upgraded to the parallel to USIB. If this were accepted, the intelligence flow in any crisis would apparently be from the collection systems (See comments on Recommendation a.) to the NMIC to the Watch Committee to WSAG to the NSC. Who would chair the Watch Committee is not stated, but it would obviously not be me and I doubt if Hall intends it to be you. I would be delighted to step aside, but I doubt that you want to abdicate this responsibility.

4. It is necessary to treat Hall's recommendations the same way.

a. To upgrade the capabilities of the senior representatives of CIA, NSA, and State as well as those from DIA on the NMIC/NMCC Watch Team to provide information support for all levels of crisis management in addition to supporting Watch Committee and Watch Report generation.

On the surface this would appear to say that the three Agencies should have stronger representation in the NMIC, but "to provide information support for all levels of crisis management" really means subordinating all collection systems, including the DDO, to NMIC control. This was quite explicit in some of the earlier studies that underlie Hall's letter.

b. To formally extend the charter of the Watch Committee to cover all developing crisis situations which may involve U.S. interests rather than those involving the "Sino-Soviet Bloc" only.

This explicitly turns over to the Watch Committee and NMIC virtually all important current intelligence.

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c. To encourage and highlight separate views in the Watch Reports rather than subordinating them in consensus.

A blow for motherhood. I should only note that I have been trying for years to get someone to dissent from a Watch Report and can find no takers in the DoD.

d. To provide staff and administrative support to the Watch Committee from existing 24-hour Watch centers and to eliminate the National Indications Center as a redundant activity.

Partially acceptable. The Watch Centers can supply staff and administrative support, but not substantive support. This last is still a matter of mustering all the analytic resources of the Community. Hence it needs a Community mechanism to synthesize the various inputs and focus them on the warning problem, which I am here still defining as the narrow one of strategic warning. Rather than eliminating the NIC entirely, therefore, we recommend retaining a nucleus to perform this correlating role, collocated with and supported by but independent of one of the Community operations centers. (This would still permit a radical reduction in strength.) Such an arrangement would protect your equity in strategic warning as a National Intelligence problem.

5. Dr. Hall's final paragraph is overtaken by your proposal to do this in a USIB working group. Note, however, that he suggests we work directly with DIA, thus leaving USIB's Watch Committee and your national responsibilities to be disposed of outside the USIB arena.

6. When we last discussed the Watch Committee and the NIC you contended there was no reason to have any dedicated organization to support the Committee. I reiterate now that the proposals to substitute the

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NMIC for the NIC are part of a larger effort to reduce the DCI's authority. You could not have more explicit evidence of this than this letter.

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Richard Lehman
Director of Current Intelligence

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